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The Gallery, Vol. 3, No. 2

Connecticut College

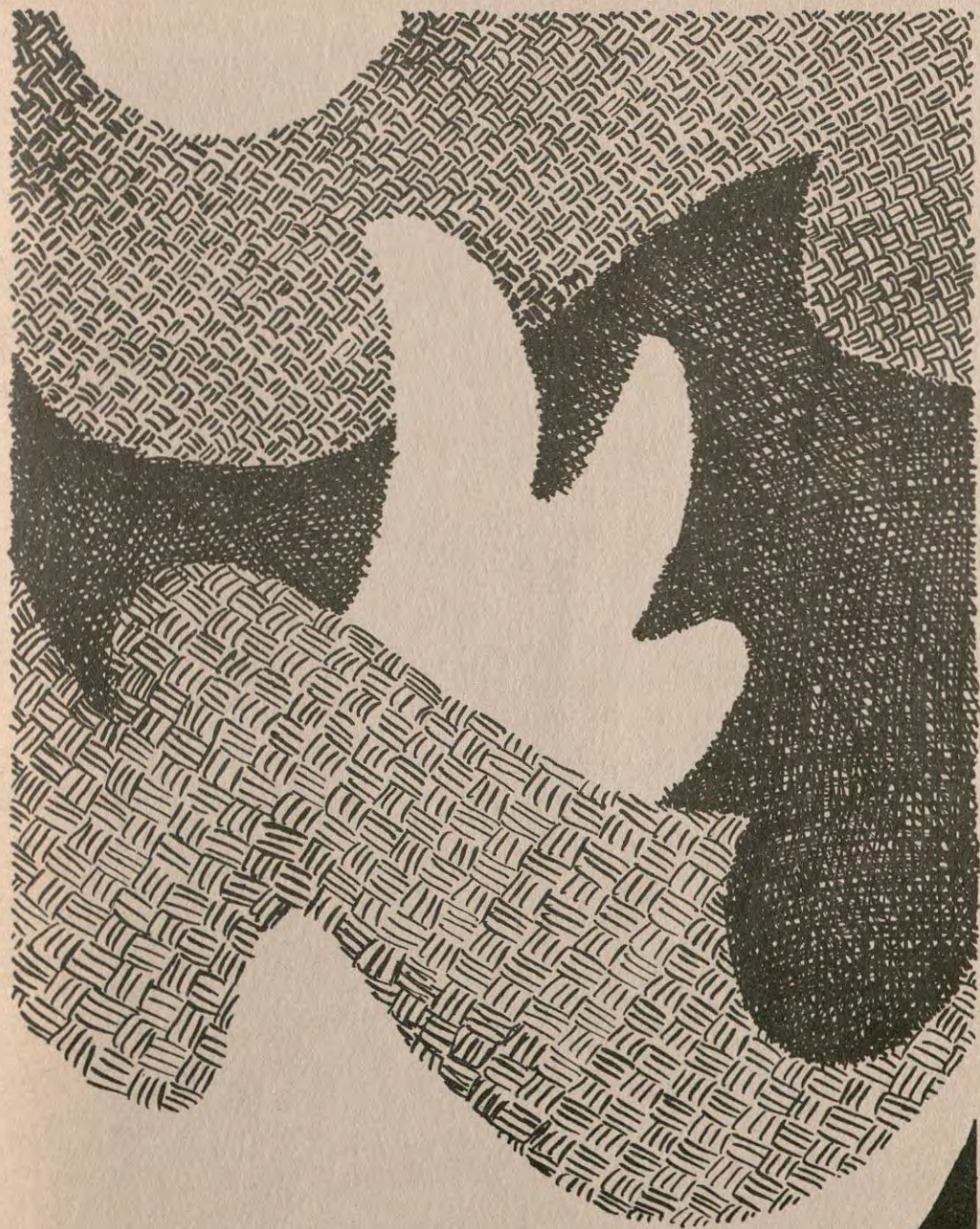
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THE GALLERY

SPRING 1984

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THE GALLERY --

Connecticut College Art and Literary Journal

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This issue of the Gallery is dedicated with admiration and affection to Mike Shinault and Jan Fitzpatrick of the Connecticut College Print Shop. Without their dedication, skill, and patience, The Gallery would not exist.

— the editors —

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40. Ilisa Sohmer

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Farewell to a Friend Half-known

41 Catherine A. Sponagle

Written in Boston to my Sister at Camp
Another Scarlet Letter
Sea Glass

Cover Design by Kent Matricardi

with special thanks to R. Lee Arthur

Another Place (for DHJ)

The vital
concern we have
with relation-
(one to another)
ships, moving
to other places.
To fulfill-
meant everything
beneath, between, under-
standing within
the guiding pillars,
fire and cloud,
a baptismal arch
benumbing our consciousness
of freedom together.

In England
we found a rainbow
invisibly gathering
over a small hill
in the east.

To W. H. Auden

For now,
I have your Lunar Beauty,
without the longing
and desiring - -
conceived immediacy,
outside of time.
The distance between
my days and nights
is immense,
a complete sphere,
isolated from the commonness.
Our difference, Auden:
my wholeness allows
a human feature.

The Breakline

We've always inhabited
this territory -- where the
waves of our collected emotions
crashed down on us. Our
feelings swell and grow

to an intensity that has swept
us to shore, to the beginning.
Again and again we've left
the beach -- that place
where we longed for offshore excitement,

and reached the breakline.
Struggling to stand against
the destructiveness, the fear of
being swept out to sea
drifts regularly in and out of our minds.

Open waters are inviting --
the ocean shelf a quiet place
deposited with the unsuccessful
who braved the white water.

Together we must be silent now.
Don't look to me for help,
and I won't pray for a stray wave
to bring us together.
That churning and turbulence will drown me.

On The Deserted House

We work these days for the meaning
it gives to our lives. We are
proud people, Olga, we love

the stability we have now. Perhaps
your son will return from school and marry
your supervisor's pretty daughter. You think

she is well brought-up. You think many things
Olga, but the echo of terrorists trying to disturb
the order we long for begins to reverberate

in our heads. We hate them. The Government
will punish them. Some of our friends
are involved - - you realize we must not trust

by appearance any more? But Olga,
your son is implicated!

'Only don't get frightened, for God's sake,
Olga Petrovna, calm down, please. There's
nothing to worry about. It's nothing
terrible . . . Kolya was arrested.'

A simple misunderstanding that will be quickly corrected.

But it is taking longer than you, Olga,
expected. Your world is crumbling,
and you have only your friends now.

Who would have thought the families we despised,
we now huddle with on stairs
and in lines of sorrow, would be our friends?

People are going crazy. Olga, you have
quit working, you wear felt boots, galoshes,
warm clothes for waiting and waiting.

You are telling lies to enable yourself to live on.
Your son will never find you, he needs you.
Nowhere to go, no job, prison record on his I.D.

But now, Olga, we can not trust
and I believe something is wrong - -
it is time to desert the house.

Stop telling me
Kolya will return, I must hold on to Moscow.
They are lies, all lies.

— Tom Curtis

The Woman In The Waves

I

Once again
I find myself surrounded
by the arms I fell in love with.
The only arms
that really know
how to hold me.
Why is it only death that reunites?
I hated you, you say,
I hated you when you left
and you hold me tighter.
I bury my head
in your shoulder
and I say,
I loved you too much.
There hasn't been
enough time.
Why is it always death that reunites?

II

At the Metropolitan
with my mother,
my eyes are riveted
to a painting by Courbet.
The woman's body
is larger than all the sea
it seems.
Yet one wonders whether
she will be engulfed
by the water
licking at her breasts.
She knows the water well
as one must
who chooses to wade,
though we can't always be certain
of our knowledge
until we're breast-deep
in the water.

III

After a while
being with you
was too much
like standing still.
How can you love too much? you ask,
and I don't reply
because you know the answer
as well as I do.

IV

Water cleanses and kills
and half of me
is already submerged.
Water is always changing,

always the same
and half of me
is already submerged.

Note: *The Woman in the Waves*, a painting by
Gustave Courbet, hangs in the Metropolitan
Museum of Art.

Sitting

A solitary woman
Staring off into murky, moon-filled water

A murky, moon-filled woman
Wondering why "woman" is too big a label
to fit into yet.

She sat alone that night
On the pier
Looking over the Hudson.
The aircraft carrier
Loomed larger than life
Or death next to her.
Even foggy, polluted water
Reflects the moon, she
thought. And she basked
in the metal fish smell
and watched the shimmering reflection
of the moon shining off
The oil-covered water.
She wondered why she felt
like she should have been lonely, because
She knows the gaping hole of darkness
is a cold loyal companion
and the unabashed stars
will stay with her past the end.

Over and Over

Anything can, accidentally, be the cause of pleasure, pain, or desire.

— Spinoza

Barely more than strangers
we met
when we both thought
you were dying,
When my arms were
what you fell into . . .
How could that ever be enough?
In the moment before death,
anyone's death,
there is nothing left but to
Hold on.

Once, for a few moments,
you needed my life
And so I had to stir life
into all that you touched.
After all, once I held
your life,
what was left
but to let go?

When I turn
I focus
on what stands behind me.
I see myself and the one you loved
embracing in an alcohol haze.
Who was I trying to be close to?

Paths reach behind me and
before me
as I wander.
The paths become circles.

Our lives have become
intimately entwined
with no more than that first touch.
But I can now hold your hands
as they fall into mine.
I can hold your hands
until we both know
you won't die.
How can that ever be enough?

— Monica B. Pearl



BEWARE of 5 BAD DOGS

A Hand in A Mirror

If I reach toward you I reach toward this thing
As a hand in a mirror reaches toward itself

Susan Sherman
"Natural Light"
With Anger / With Love

The world was crystal. Ice dripped from branches and bushes while the sun's reflection sprinkled light along the pathway. Terry walked looking down at her boots and listening to the heels click on the pavement. Though they really didn't click since the heels were rubber, but Terry felt like they clicked. She glanced up at the clock on the steeple of the chapel, squinting her eyes against the brightness. Five to ten. Terry walked, shoulders erect, arms loosely at her sides, her eyes focused on the leather and rubber hitting the sidewalk and slightly quickened her pace.

She glanced up at the clock again when she got to the infirmary door. One to ten. Terry walked in and took the steps two at a time up to the waiting room outside Pat's office. She sat down in the cushioned wicker chair next to the table of scattered *Newsweeks* and *New Yorkers*. The same copies that had been there since she had started coming five months ago.

As soon as Terry sat down the door opened. Probably 10:00 on the nose, thought Terry. "Come on in," Pat said like she was having a dinner party and Terry was one of her guests. Gracious of you, Terry thought, and then stood up and walked past Pat, not looking at her. Terry clicked down the short carpeted hallway to Pat's office. She sat down in the armchair while Pat closed the door and took the phone off the hook. Then Pat sat in her own chair that formed an L with Terry's, folded her hands, and looked at Terry. Pat was young, in her mid-thirties and had shoulder-length brown hair. Her brown eyes were clear, receptive.

Terry looked around the room as if it were her first time there. She always looked around because she didn't know what to say to begin. She hated the beginning of a session.

"I saw a movie last night."

"What movie did you see?"

" 'They Shoot Horses, Don't They' . "

Terry knew Pat was waiting for her to go on, so she didn't.

"What did you think about it?"

Christ, stop being so patient and interested. Who cares about a stupid movie.
"It was good."

Pat waited again and when Terry didn't say anything she said, "What was it about it that interested you?"

Terry looked up, "Nothing. It was a stupid movie. Nothing interested me about it. I'm sorry I brought it up."

Terry looked around again, "I had an hallucination last night."

"What kind of an hallucination?"

"What do you mean what kind?"

"What was it that you saw?"

"Well, I heard something first."

"Uh-huh."

"A voice."

"Pat waited "What did it say?"

"Terry! God Terry, please. I need you!"

Terry stepped out of the stream of water and pulled back the shower curtain.

Andrea stood there looking at her, looking at her longingly, her eyes misty.

Terry stepped out of the shower. Soapy and dripping with water, she hugged Andrea tightly. They hugged like someone had died. Like Terry had died. Terry buried her mouth in Andrea's neck and tasted the water that had dripped there from her hair. Terry licked the drops of water but Andrea didn't notice and kept hugging her.

Terry stood under the stream of water watching herself wrapped around Andrea. It interested her that she was able to watch herself, but it didn't especially surprise her.

"You don't have to patronize me. I didn't talk to God or anything."

"I didn't say that. I'm interested in what you heard."

"Someone was screaming for me. A friend of mine."

"And was she?"

"I was in the shower."

Terry looked at the tapestry hanging on the wall next to the window. Orange interwoven with brown. Large clumsy ropes of yarn interwoven.

"I need you," Terry said looking at Pat, "that's what she said."

"That's what who said?"

"My friend ... Andrea ... when I saw her ... in the shower ..."

Andrea pulled away a little bit and stroked Terry's wet hair. "It's okay, Sweet-heart." Terry was crying and her hot tears mingled with the cold drops of water from the shower. She was still kissing Andrea's neck. Her breasts were pushing against Andrea's white blouse.

Terry blinked a few times and wiped away the soap that was dripping into her eyes. She still didn't know why it didn't seem strange to be watching herself. The only thing that was strange was that she was hugging Andrea so tightly. She hadn't had that much energy in a long time.

"... but she wasn't really there because she was in my room when I got back." Terry stared out the window. "We were studying together and I went to take a shower ..."

Terry opened her mouth to continue but remained silent for a long while. "I had a boyfriend for a year and a half when I was in high school. Good-looking. Always knew the right thing to say. First guy I slept with." Terry looked back at Pat as if remembering she was there. "Haven't seen anyone regularly since Jim. I speak to him sometimes but I don't miss having a boyfriend."

Pat waited for a pause and said "Terry, what about what you saw in the shower?"

Terry furrowed her eyebrows as if trying to remember. "Yeah, what about it?"

"What was going on?"

"I don't know what was going on. I got back to my room and Andrea was there. She wasn't in the shower." Terry clenched her hands together.

"What happened, Terry? You look terrible."

Terry sat down on the bed next to Andrea pushing books and papers aside. Her bathrobe hung loosely on her strong, dark body.

"I was worried about you, Terry. Things started to feel funny. I almost came looking for you."

"What time is it?"

"Two-thirty. Terry, what is it?" Andrea wrapped her thin fingers around Terry's dark wrists, gripped them tightly and looked at her. Terry stared down at

her wrists. Slowly she stood up and without freeing her arms, knelt by the bed, and lay her head on Andrea's lap.

"You probably don't believe what I'm telling you."

"Why shouldn't I believe you?"

"Because it's crazy. Normal people don't see themselves hugging other people who aren't there."

"You saw yourself hugging her ..."

"People don't usually look at themselves. I mean I was watching myself."

Terry leaned forward and moved around in her seat. She looked down at the faded brown carpet.

"I was reading poetry." Terry looked at her hands and didn't continue right away.

Pat looked at Terry and lay her hands casually on the arms of her chair. "You were reading poetry?"

Terry looked up and out the window, glancing at Pat periodically. "I was supposed to be writing my paper but I stopped to read some of these poems to Andrea."

"Some of what poems?"

"Just some poems that I had been reading the other day. I knew Andrea would like them so I read some to her." Terry looked back again at her hands. "I like reading to her. She listens so carefully."

"And this was last night?"

"No, two nights ago. It was about three in the morning. Andrea left after that to go to sleep. But I knew she listened - even though she was tired."

"Do you feel that people don't listen to you?"

"Some people listen to me."

"Do you feel that I don't listen to you?"

"No, you listen to me" Terry bent her left leg so her foot rested on her right knee and she fingered a thread hanging off the end of her jeans. "You know, Andrea really understands me. I can say anything to her and she knows what I'm talking about. I don't even have to say anything." Terry bit her lower lip and continued to play with the thread on her pants.

"Terry," Pat started, "I know we've discussed your family briefly, but how do you feel about your mother?"

Terry started to laugh. A sarcastic nervous laugh. She stopped when Pat said "Why are you laughing?"

Terry sat up. "Because it's the stupidest, most typical question I've ever heard in my life."

"Why don't you answer it" Pat said, not joining in Terry's amusement.

"My mother's my mother. I don't feel anything about her except that she's my mother." Terry kept a wry smile on her face as if she were humoring Pat.

"You once said that Andrea reminds you of your mother."

"When?"

"A while ago - and I was wondering what your feelings were."

"About what?" Terry sat up straighter, anger replacing her sarcasm.

"About Andrea. About your mother. About what kind of connections there might be."

"They both drink diet-pepsi and they both have short hair."

"You're angry."

"I am not angry. I just think this is ridiculous. Just because someone reminds me of someone else doesn't mean there's any hidden meaning."

"Okay."

"Okay? You're satisfied?"

"If you feel it's not significant then we don't have to discuss it right now, though it may be something you want to think about."

"Fine. I'll think about it."

Terry sat cross-legged on the bed wearing a pair of flannel pajamas. Andrea sat behind her combing Terry's hair.

"It's too short to give this much attention to it" Terry said, hoping Andrea wouldn't stop.

"It's so nice and thick," Andrea said, running her fingers through Terry's damp hair.

"We're not getting any work done, you know."

"I know. You're incorrigible. I never seem to get any work done when I'm with you." Andrea kept running the comb through Terry's hair.

"But it's fun staying up" Terry said, hoping Andrea would affirm this.

"Yeah, but I yawn all through classes. I don't know how you do it. You've been staying up even after I go back to my room."

Terry pulled away, leaned back against her pillow and looked at Andrea. "When you were going out with Ted did you ever feel that you just had to have sex because it was part of the relationship?"

"Hm. I guess. Sex was never that big a deal. Sometimes when I was stoned I got into it. I mean Ted never really pressured me. We just did it."

Andrea started to giggle, her shoulder-length black hair falling into her face.

"What's so funny?" Terry's eyes widened like a child who was missing something.

Andrea fell back on the bed laughing, her legs touching Terry's knees. "We did it," Andrea said laughing harder.

"You weirdo," Terry said and threw a small light blue pillow at her.

Terry started laughing too as Andrea threw the pillow back. "Very interesting," Terry said putting on a fake German accent and raising her eyebrows, "sex vith your boyfriend makes you laugh . . ."

"Is that supposed to be a German accent?" Andrea laughed, "Sad. Very sad." And they both began to giggle again.

Through her giggles Andrea said "Sex does not make me laugh."

Terry stopped giggling and looked at Andrea. "I didn't say sex. I said sex with your boyfriend."

Then Andrea stopped too and looked back at Terry. "I'm really tired."

"I love you."

Andrea looked at Terry and saw her eyes watering and her hands holding the small blue pillow.

"I love you too, Terry," She put her hands on top of Terry's.

Terry looked down at Andrea's hands, "I'm tired too."

Andrea looked at Terry "Are you really?"

"No" Terry didn't look up "Are you?"

"What are you afraid of?" Andrea loosened Terry's hands from the pillow and held them but Terry pulled her hands away.

"I saw you when I was in the shower." Terry closed her eyes.

"What?"

"Nothing."

"Terry, what happened in the shower?"

"Terry, I sense hostility."

Brilliant, Terry thought. "What do you mean?"

"Are you angry with me?"

"That's just how I am." God, talk about defensive. "I'm not angry at anyone. How come you want me to be angry?"

"I don't want you to be angry. I sense that you're angry and thought we could figure out where it's coming from."

"I told you I'm not angry." Terry crossed her arms and leaned back.

"How do you feel about Andrea?"

Terry unfolded her arms and her shoulders softened. In a voice a little louder than a whisper she said, "I love Andrea."

"What does that mean to you?"

"I like to be with her. She understands me. She cares about me. She laughs when I try to be funny."

"Does she *take* care of you?"

"Yeah. When I need her to." "When do you need her to?"

"She took care of me last night when I got out of the shower."

"How did she take care of you?"

"Just by being there. She touches me. She's not afraid to touch me."

Terry was staring out the window.

"Are you afraid to touch her?"

"Why are you asking me so many questions?"

"It's almost time for breakfast," Andrea said thinking out loud, "the dining hall will be open soon."

"Hm?" Terry squinted her eyes open and looked up at Andrea's brown eyes. Andrea sat cross-legged at the head of the bed leaning against a pillow. Terry lay with her head in Andrea's lap while Andrea rubbed her temples.

"What a woman of leisure you are," Andrea looked down at Terry and smiled. "Feeling better?"

"Yes" Terry closed her eyes. "God, I'm sorry I broke down like that. I'm sorry."

"I think you need to get some sleep" Andrea continued to massage the area between Terry's ears and eyes.

"I don't feel tired. Just relaxed," she sighed and settled her head deeper into Andrea's lap.

"It's getting hard to keep up with you. First something weird happens in the shower which you won't even talk about. Then you're fine. Then you just start crying. I think it's me."

Terry sprang up and turned to look at Andrea, "Why do you think it's you?"

"I'm just kidding."

"Do you really think it's you?"

"Do you think it's me?"

Terry got up and walked to her desk which started at the end of her bed and faced the wall where there was a brown and tan tapestry hanging. She sat in the desk chair facing Andrea but looked at the tapestry. "I want to get some sleep before my first class."

"You want me to leave."

"You're almost as smart as my counselor."

"What is that supposed to mean?" She didn't move to get up.

"Nothing. Forget it."

"I don't understand you Terry."

"Yes you do."

Andrea looked up at Terry. "What?"

"Yes you do understand me. You know you understand me. You're the only one that does."

"You didn't like me asking you that."

"It's just that you're firing all these questions at me."

"You stopped me when I asked you about touching Andrea."

"Are you trying to get me to admit something?"

"Are you trying to admit something?"

"No. Don't twist things."

"Terry, our time is up for today, but I think there's a lot for us to continue discussing."

"Uh-huh."

"Is there anything you'd like to conclude with before we stop?"

"No."

"I'll see you next week then," and Pat leaned forward and stood up.

Terry stood up, walked past Pat and opened the door. Pat held the door as Terry walked out. "Bye."

"Bye," Terry said without looking back at Pat.

Terry walked down the short hallway and felt her boots hitting the stairs as she walked down. She opened the door to outside and the brightness overwhelmed her. She had to squint to see. Stuffing her hands in the front pockets of her jeans she walked along the path back to her dorm, listening for the click of her boots on the pavement. It was getting warm and the ice hanging off the trees was beginning to melt. Terry squinted up at the clock on the chapel. Eight to eleven. The world surrounding her glistened and Terry looked around at all the crystal.

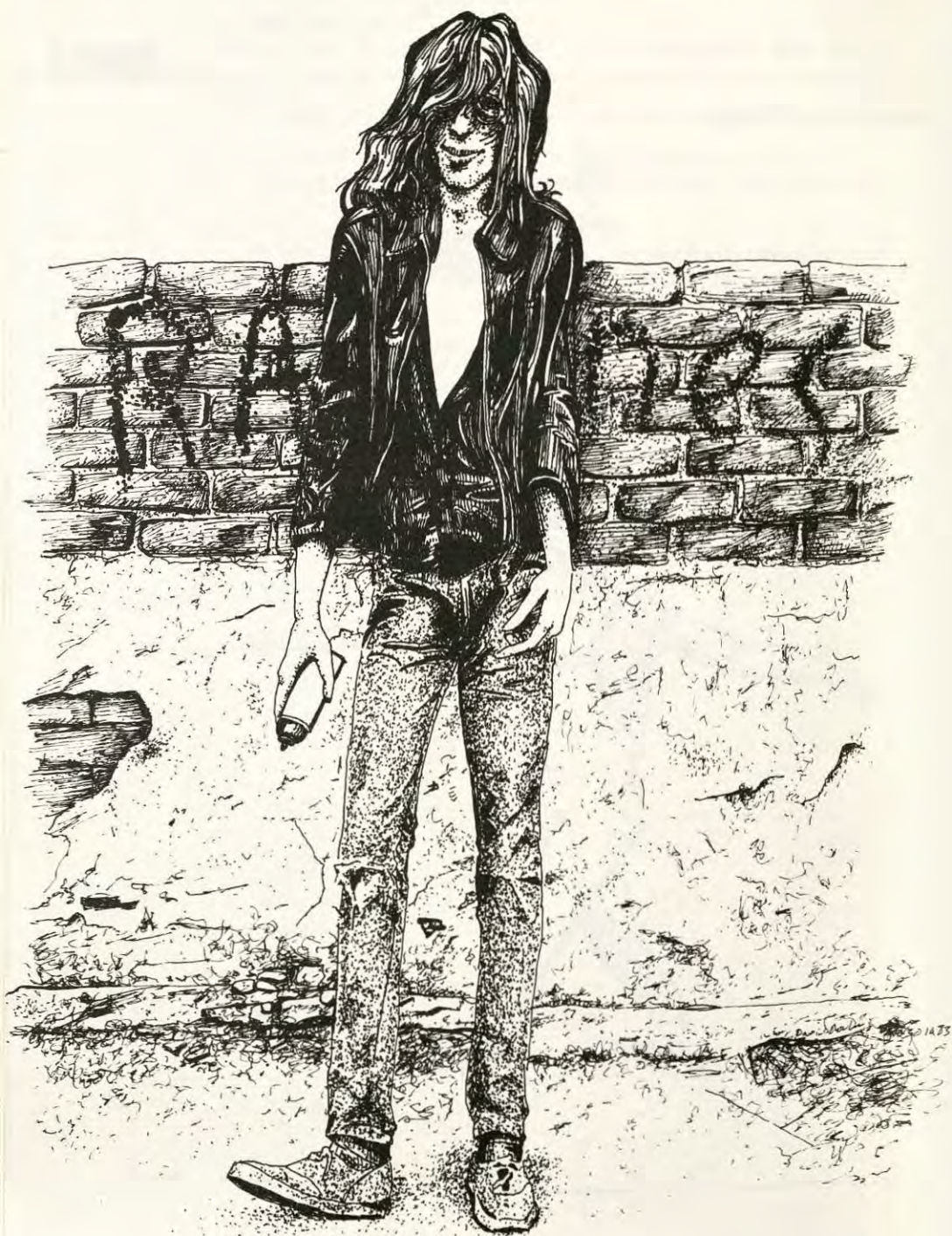
— Monica B. Pearl

Written and
illustrated by David Norling

Geymour

The Story
of a
Dancer





Return to Tintern Abbey

A century has passed now its long course
And once again, three-quarters of that gone
Since I have seen this long-beloved place
And breathed its beauty. Well do I recall
How these unchanging sights did mark my growth
And teach me how the boy'd become a man
With new awareness of surrounding grace
I mourned the loss but welcomed yet the new
For I could measure my own life against
The non-temporal vision of this place.

Of't while I lay in dark and dreary sleep
Amid the disillusionment of death
I dreamt about the days I walked along
These hills of green. It consoled me to think
That all the beauty my world gave to me,
The inspiration and the will to live,
Might nourish yet another. This I thought.
But since Grand Force hath freed me from my grave
And I stand yet upon the bluff to gaze
Again upon the playground of my youth
And my thought-provoker, I must sorrow.

For what is this which burns into my eyes
And causes me to gasp in disbelief?
The grass is gone, with asphalt in its place
And just before these buildings, cold and gray
And hateful with the boast of intrusion
There stands a sign which reads in letters bold
"The Tintern Abbey Condominiums,
Flats Bought and Sold." No rabbit runs, or roe,
Merely a rat, fat on the spoils of men
Runs hurriedly amid the filth and grime.

Is nothing sacred? I must ask myself
And gaze before me where the answer lies.
The scene clouds with my tears, my heart is broke.
Small children play in soot where once I ran
Free as the mountain goat and felt the breeze
Brush soft upon my face and through my hair.
Where I discovered treasures in fine stones
And leaves and twigs, these children find but shards
Of broken glass and scrap. Sad eyes peer up
Devoid of any hopes or dreams of life
Within a better place. And true indeed.
For this heath was the better place, and now
'Tis gone. My sister, sleep. Do not, as I did, rise
To look upon this place of hopelessness.
For you, too, pranced through all of its glory
And now can but despair.

We may not sit
To think upon our lives and who we are
With sharp nostalgia for the childhood lost
And yet with faith that Nature will renew.
Mankind hath murdered hope! Men have sucked dry
like so many leeches, the world's blood. Good God!
Ye parasites! My words have been in vain,
Temporal as the land. For when mankind
Can disregard the land, so can they me.
The world of men has now grown to that point
Where they should sit to dwell upon the past.
To think of days gone by when they did run
And build, without a thought about it. Now it's time
To recognize the growth and mourn the loss
Of innocence which progress has procured.
'Tis clear time may not cease its forward tread
But with the recollection and, thus, love
Of days before matur'ty stained these scenes
One might see what's gone bad and try to save
Whatever child's glow time's left to us.
As this place lay untouched to mark my life,
So stand I, now immortal, for the world!

— Victoria Morse

Mistral

The sun wakes me
through my
other window,
now,

the Earth
has
turned so far

Tomorrow's sun - -

to rise where?

I will
awake
in a strange bed

and remember

Days
I held my harmonica
up
to the wind

and it sang

—Sarah M. Babbitt

We Watch

Well we many have spent
our lives not scared,
scared but not talking
for fear of telling lies,
not listening for fear of hearing too
just watching wide open
everything beam in and out
without catching shadows

we many appear
smart as bugs in a jungle
unstoppable species,
or bright as neon Boy Blue
radiant for miles in glowing gas
we many fool again,
Japanese sparsity furnishing
our room with many screens

Helen

She goes about her chores
with thought to spare,
always never done,

slipping pillows into
sleeves of care she's
tucked away from sun

but not from light. Helen
has to wear five
rings instead of none

for while the left hand winds
stray hair tightly
in a knotty bun

does her right, glorious,
bare, still reach back
to have refused, once.

Moon Man

I

A warm hand smoothes the sand
beneath my feet, coolly
washes back, leaving just
a fingerprint behind.

II

Talk about the passion
I've found in his silence - -
nearly changing colors
on his wild twilight face

III

Shy Dawn, estranged lover,
keeps earth and I from his
callous grip. In morning
she rises cloud by cloud

IV

His children spin at night,
some holding hands, some wink-
ing brightly. They call to
each other in colors

V

His face reflects all days
all night, careless lover
after careless lover
under a stardust sheet

— eden marriott

In a City of Sand

The dogs know enough
to stay off the street
between dawn and dusk
when the muffled drums
from surrounding hills
like a safe dropped
from the seventh floor
by some careless mover
fall from the clear blue
without courtesy of warning.
They know enough to ignore
the calls of masters
beckoning with open hand
whistles and clanking
of spoons on steel bowls
to prowl dark canyons
doorway to doorway
along pitted walls rising
like obelisks to the crescent
moon.

A Voice in the Rose Garden

Awake! Awake Phaethon from deadly dreams
Before your fiery chariot ascends,
Immortal horses running wild, pretend
No more to have command. Discard those schemes
That lead us to the brink. Those blasphemies
Of weapons freeze march hand in hand, transcend
Your slogans aimed at lurking Reds. Suspend
Your disbelief or be prepared for screams
The likes of which this world has never known.
Your sabre rattle, while just an actor's guise,
May yet induce the nervous fiend to draw,
But then, what then when lethal seed is sown?
Take heed the pleas, resist the fatal flaw,
When sanity declares "Reduce!" - - - comply.

— Peter Gross

God-Spell

Impatient breeze
scurries by -- wait, I say, and stretch out a hand
but it's gone
a chill possesses me
running its tongue up and down my spine,
pressing its lips to the soles of my feet, my toes
I shudder in response.
Pulling me up straight and tall, Zephyr grasps my shoulders
as the earth beneath my feet laughs and playfully
bounces them up and down, forward, forward,
faster, faster . . .
Another passing gust
entwines its fingers in my hair and pulls it back
lifting my face for a kiss
then teasingly flings hair into my eyes.
I find myself running ever swifter
propelled not by my own power
but by the sheer force of his breath
For my mind is bewitched by his presence
And my body is no longer my own.

— Jennifer Olson

Every Night There is an Almost Finished Murder

Raggedy Ann is kicking the China Doll's head.

At night,

I hear the slow cotton-foot thud.
I hear the music-box hidden heart
changing, crackling

new notes.

Raggedy Ann is tired of being silly striped.

At night,

I see the hyphened grin a broken line.
I see the white glass cheeks start
bruising, cracking

small veins.

Raggedy Ann is killing the China Doll.

I do not move the blacked cotton
hoof.
I do not start
at the death-sounds crying

save me same me save same me

It is their fight.
I do not move to change the night.

— Carolyn Egan



Manhattan: Sketches of Five Individuals

I. Bird Man of Battery Park

He moved slowly and smoothly like a cat nearing an unsuspecting mouse, though a required change in movement or direction caused him to jerk mechanically like a Disneyland figure. His reaction time was slow. He always stayed within fifteen feet of the small, lollipop-shaped tree, and it was within this area that the Bird Man stalked his mice - - pigeons.

Pigeons were his sole concern, and the people sitting on nearby benches were non-existent for him. The Bird Man wasn't a performer; there was no audience needed. His stained, oversized, and hole-filled army fatigues folded and creased as he lifted one knee toward his chest, then straightened the limb, his black foot aimed at the ground in front of him as if ready to pierce it. As he lifted one hand steadily over his head, he lowered the other, and one could imagine him as a master of some martial art or a gold-medal swimmer, improvising without water. He was silent and never touched a pigeon.

The Bird Man occupied himself in Battery Park, with Downtown on one side and the Harbor on the other. The East River and the Hudson formed an arrow which pointed toward the Statue of Liberty. It has been heard pigeons could be found there. The food stands in the park, with their overflowing garbage cans, kept the Bird Man alive. He wanted to stalk pigeons.

There were nevertheless onlookers. Old ladies told each other not to stare at him, as they looked on in fear and disgust, because he might "catch you." Children laughed and jumped up and down when they saw the Bird Man and chose watching him to having ice cream or buying hats at the souvenir shop. Parents warned of getting too close, but no one ever did. Businessmen pretended to ignore the Bird Man while talking to one another, but with time they turned their heads and commented on him.

II. Professor of Penn Station

"You aren't American, are you?" asked the old woman of the young man next to her on the lobby bench.

"Yes, I am."

"French or Italian?"

He was tempted to answer, Thousand Island. "Neither."

"Nationality?"

"Well, my mother is - "

"No, makes no difference what your mother is, just your father."

"He's English," the young man responded.

"That's the highest, you know."

"What?"

"That's the highest. The English are best. Then come Irish, Germans - "

"I take it you're English?"

The old woman shut her eyes and shook her head. "Makes no difference at all. Christian?"

"Yes."

"Protestant?"

"Yes," he said louder.

She concluded. "You get an A on the United States quiz. I interview a lot of handsome young men and you'd be surprised how many Ds and Fs I hand out. I say, 'Jew or Gentile?' They say, 'Agnostic.' Did you know that three-fourths of Americans are ding-a-lings? Three-fourths of our country is made up of idiots."

This young man was just one of many interviewed by the old woman that day. She'd been going to Penn Station for years to give her quiz, and her brown

cloth coat, vinyl purse, and orange bangs had become familiar to any regular patron. Her white, drawn skin always looked as if it had been freshly cleansed with a scrub brush, and her coat - - made of the felt-like material which inevitably attracts lint - - was always lint-free. She spoke quietly, yet forcefully and to the point. She never smiled.

The old woman was especially pleased today because the station was full of college students who were on their way home for the summer. She remembered how full the station had been nearly two months before with the students returning to school from Spring Vacation and how she could distinguish the wealthy boys from the poor by the color of their skin. She didn't worry about the girls as they didn't count.

The old woman left the young man whom she'd just interviewed delighted. She only wished she'd have such luck for the rest of the afternoon and walked around the main lobby looking for someone else. She found another young man but terminated the interview when he answered, "Catholic," to which she responded, "Degenerate!"

III. Parade Leader of Fifth Avenue

There were fifteen in all, most of them out-of-towners, who marched down Fifth Avenue in front of the Plaza singing "I Love New York." They didn't know all the lyrics so just kept repeating the same phrase. Their smiles that day had been provided by the man at the head of the line who occasionally turned around, faced them, and blew kisses with both hands. He was their leader.

His smile was that of a popular young politician, and when it was at its prime, his olive complexion would fold, giving him an added maturity. As he raised his arms and turned his palms toward the disciples to send kisses, his brown fur coat would open in front, exposing his lavender cardigan and black denim jeans. His shoes were Italian and pointed.

Before the parade began, one of his recruits asked him why he was conducting this little thing. He answered by saying, "Because I thought it would be a beautiful way to end the day by telling everyone that I led a parade on Fifth Avenue." His personality was warm and his Avon-lady way of approaching people won him at least fourteen friends. Most of his followers were tourists and joined for a variety of reasons. The elderly woman with the Gimbles bag had found him absolutely charming. The young businesswoman found him attractive as did the boy from Exeter.

"Would you like to be in my parade?" he would ask the people crossing the street from Central Park to the open area in front of the Plaza. Most initially thought that they were surely being asked to be extras for a film-shooting. He was surprised how few asked him his purpose.

The parade ended a couple blocks south of where it had begun. Reactions were seldom and consisted only of double-takes or smiles.

He turned to the pretzel man on the corner and said, "I just had myself a parade on Fifth Avenue."

IV. Subway Violinist

The usual sounds of the train station at Seventy-seventh and Lexington - the metallic grind of turnstiles, the honking of cars on the street above, and the murmur of voices from the token window - were invitingly dominated that day by the sound of a young violinist playing a Bach concerto. The combination of his smiling face and virtuosity drew dollar bills and coins into his open case, his sack lunch resting beside it. He was alone, save for the few loyal listeners who stayed near him. He went to Juilliard.

His clothes were modest: a faded yellow oxford-cloth button-down, a pair of baggy, worn chinos, white socks (the kind with the red and blue stripes at the top), and brown penny loafers, the upper separating from the sole. Despite the heavy toll his clothes had taken over the last four years, they were immaculate, and one imagined him as a mama's boy, her pride and joy doing what he could on her small income. His straight, dark brown hair was parted on the side and a few strands in front occasionally fell over his ruddy forehead. He loved the violin.

The violinist chose to play in a large, open area, past the turnstiles and down the steps. Most people walked past him quickly, anxious for their train, as a few paused to listen, look at him, and return his warm smile. It was mutual appreciation. He would often say something witty to his tiny audience, all the time displaying a fine mastery of his skill, and they would nod and perhaps toss money into his case. He was on his way to the Village for an art show.

When the No. 6 train charged into the station, the violinist was a good four lines from the end of the movement.

"It doesn't look like I'll be able to finish this in time," he said aloud, still smiling, but no one heard him except the boy by the *Chorus Line* poster who raised his chin, smiled, and nodded.

V. Greenwich Village Weightlifter

Resting the barbell on the two metal holders above his head, he got up from the vinyl-covered, padded bench and walked the short distance to a nearby window. He folded his arms and looked down onto Christopher Street. The gym where he worked out was above a small men's clothing store (with brother stores in Provincetown, Fire Island, and San Francisco) and was lighted only by the afternoon sunlight. The gym was small and painted dreary, light brown. Different types of weight-lifting devices were scattered throughout, and a large mirror hung on the wall opposite the windows. He was alone today, and this was not unusual.

The weightlifter wore a white tank top, white boxer-style gym shorts, and white low-cut socks. His short, muscular body was of a deep orange color, tanned from lying out on the roof of his third-floor apartment just blocks away from the gym. His dark blond hair was cut short, enabling the gold cuff in his right ear to reflect the sunlight. His face was like Beethoven's, only glorified, and clean-shaven. It was his twenty-sixth birthday.

As he looked out from the window, he frowned upon the emptiness below him; the Village was so lifeless in the afternoon, at least on Christopher Street. He saw a few businessmen walking toward the pier. He presumed they were married. A small number of people could be seen entering the Mexican food place and art gallery across the street. Most of the bars were closed; they thrived at night. They used to, that is, until the recent menace. Now clinics sent out warnings, and the bars were rarely crowded. The world for the weightlifter was in the dark, and that is all for which he prepared.

He showered, dressed, and walked to Sheridan Square where he worked at a corner cafe. The job satisfied the weightlifter, giving him money for the night and a chance to meet someone - the person he'd never met. Perhaps it would be today, on his birthday.

— J. Bradley Wade

In the Meantime

1971

Dear Aunt Helen, Someday
I would like to visit your farm,
meet your cows, taste fresh milk.
When our milkman comes
in the morning, the bottles he leaves
by the back door are so cold
they drip when they stand
outside for a long time.
My mother tells me my middle name
is your middle name too.
Here is a picture I painted in school.

1983

I sign the slip,
the postman tears off the tags and receipts,
and hands me the envelope, from lawyers,
thick official paper, just off-white.
I unwrap the letter from its greeting:
"As your mother told you, Miss Helen Eveleth
provided a gift to you upon reaching the age
of twenty-one. Enclosed herewith is a check."
I wait until the rates go down
to call my mother and ask where
to invest such a sum.
In the meantime,
I keep the check in a drawer
with my socks and scarves.

Calling

The winter Pacific rolled onto the rock,
covering my mother's shoes and
filling the cuffs of her jeans.
I turned around in time to see
the water suck backwards.
My mother stood helpless there, pouting.
She said didn't you hear me calling?
I said, what did you want me to do,
scoop you up so you wouldn't get wet.

In the Courtyard

It's raining French rain
again in the courtyard.
The pigeons have left.
They've finished purring
outside the window, nudging
the pebbles on the ground
for bits of bread we dropped
there for them. You said
they were dumb birds, but
I saw them find all the pieces.

Tides

Often at night
during the red tide
we would scramble from the house
to the sand to watch the foam
rumble and splash blue and green
curled, fluorescent colors.
We would cup our hands
into the sand and trace around us
whip-like racing stripes
whose wakes glowed like gritty
wet lightning, neon sand.
Later in the bath we rinsed the grains
from our ears and our hair,
the sand collecting at the bottom of the tub.

On certain Saturday nights
from high wicker chairs
we would watch the monster movie,
with permission,
until my younger brother
nodded to sleep and I shut
my eyes from fear or exhaustion.
We would sleep in the same bed,
our feet meeting in the middle
amid the books and dolls and water guns
he stored under his covers for safety.
We did not need a night light
when the moon lit up our blankets
and brought the tide closer to the house.

— Daisy Smith



10.7.82

Salome
dances for
Heracl



TRIPTYCH: THE CREATION OF DISNEYWORLD

I.

I'm huddled passive,
fetal on plastic couches
in calculated, sinister waiting rooms.
Push sweaty hands
over my forehead
and through my hair,
wishing for a cigarette.
My pockets are empty,
everything seems to slip through fingers --
I'll have a big house,
a good car, a wife, and chase happiness
to the all-night diner.
There I'll lose the trail
in the bright reflections
of danishes and sizzling burgers.
What's a question
to a happy man?
The waiting goes on
and my hair begins to thin and fall out.
My hands pull,
one by one, fingers separate
death from life --
I've yet to learn the distinction.
What I know
could empty a book,
could hold a look --
the stars are dead;
their light is far away.

II.

Mickey has a smile,
lights up the sky in
purple, yellow, red,
and spinning blue.
Mickey has a voice,
starting from a scream
into a calm assurance --
we'll live happy.
Mickey has arms
and lifts us to the stars,
danger, darkness, fear,
he lets us down again.
Mickey has strong arms,
and we are like children,
crying he pats our backs --
we'll live happy.
Mickey has eyes,
calm and unblinking,
they see all,
never shed a tear.

Mickey has a heart
inside his head - -
it'd take your breath away.

III.

Threads of a rope
tied tightly together
like electric cables, phone lines,
that somehow form a noose.
Fatefully we bow our heads
to accept the noose,
swing in the breeze,
a metronome winding down.
I've seen them
in the marketplace,
heads tilted to the side,
as if pondering some mystery.
I'm fascinated, disgusted,
overcome by the stench - -
mountains of trash
scaled by blind climbers,
like spiders defying gravity
until someone walks through a web,
a face suddenly aged.
Threads of a rope
wind together and hold us,
perilous over the cliff.
Tomorrow the hangman
calls my name and smiles.

— George B. Pratt

F.O.M. Poem

muddled emotions for a past
that never really passed
i remember a love that was not --
only the confused curiosity
of two frightened children
desperate for oneanother
yet doomed to fall together
to fail eachother
to fly apart
alone

— Robert Reed Levinson

Untitled

I

i never met my father
but i remember when i was young
my mother only spoke
of him
to girlfriends on the phone
in cryptic-whispered phrases
that i could not understand
and when i asked about him
she'd just smile and bow her head
and ask if there was anything
to watch on the tv
and say she'd make some cocoa
to drink before we went to bed.

II

i never met my father
but i remember how i cried
that all the other children
could fill out the father side
of those sheets they always gave us
at the beginning of the year
to find out if our parents worked
and if they did—where.

III

i never met my father
but i remember the pain
of leaving school and coming home
and finding my mother
talking to her girlfriends on the phone.

— Daughn Eugenia Lee

Untitled

You're one of the glitter people.
I saw you last night
smiling over the last of a beer.
Cigarette held vice-like
between straight fingers with painted nails.
The light played on your sequins
and colors paraded on the walls around you.
You looked so happy,
Eyes dancing in the dim light.
Your companion laughed at anecdotes,
but sometimes avoided your glance.
When you're sad, wear the sweater
with the sequins,
and pretend you've gone out dancing.

Farewell To a Friend Half-known

Jed left.
Months later, I can't put the pieces together.
Of Jed --
Of his story --
Of his last minutes and final steps
to the balcony.
Slipping, tumbling, falling.
Jed.
Pensive and open-hearted,
Never dazzled by loud music, fast cars,
the fine white-powder lines
that led his friends astray.
Why did drunken sleep elude him?
He should not have been walking,
did not desire the end.
Jed coveted his dreams.
I did not know him well,
but well enough to relive his final steps
to the balcony.
Slipping, tumbling, falling,
And to wake from an occasional nightmare
Arms outstretched --
Trying to catch.

— Ilisa Sohmer

Written in Boston to My Sister at Camp

I see the street lights from my window
And hear the traffic - going places -
Families traveling. Children sleeping
In the backseat will wake someplace else.
We are children sharing a backseat
Like years ago riding from New Hampshire
to Cape Cod - but
No longer fighting, no longer sleeping
For we have a waking dream of waking
Together someplace else.

You see the moon from your window
And listen for the crickets
Over the giggling of teenage girls
In your cabin,
In the city of the woods.

Growing oversees us in subtle silence
And makes me miss you more -
Or - less as we leave childhood together.
Home is too far away or not far
Enough.
The quiet of this maturing journey
Is enough to move me to look around.
I look out my window and you out yours,
And it's odd. It must be a dream
Because we each see someplace else.

Another Scarlet Letter

At night the curtains blowing in and out
Flap like ghosts, billow like white sheets.
The line is breaking with their wet weight.
The rain has soaked everything and I
Can't be bothered to get up, go out
And get the sheets. Couldn't bear the wet
Clammy cling against my skin.
But the curtains! Why did I leave the window open?

Don't cry, angel. It's just a storm.
Don't cry. Mother is here, there, there.

There will be mosquitoes in the morning.
We'll be eaten alive when we fetch water,
But I'm getting used to that. Pearl has red
Welts on her little arms from insect bites.
She's too young to listen not to scratch.
And I scratch too, these letters I cannot send,
But must burn instead. Appropriate.
Shall we too burn in the fire
Our letter and love have kindled for us?
I'd go now, but for Pearl. And you?
What would you do? What is in you
That keeps you silent and apart?
I do not mind that I must fix the broken
Window latch and fetch the water from the brook - -
But in sane questions that our daughter daily asks
I am hung dry for an answer.

Sea Glass

What jagged bits of glass the beach-comber finds.
None are yet worn smooth and frosty,
And so he tosses them back for another season
Of rack on the rocks.
Time, Time, the numbing, dulling, smoothing
Pain for broken lovers and broken glass.
Let the hungry sea eat us all
Over and over and send us crystalized
And glinting like sea stars to the green world
To be born again in a wave
Mighty and strong to crash with splendour
On your rocky coast, your break-water.
Into infinite tears I break
With a roar and fly fragmented
Into blue-sky oblivion - -
The piercing teeth of a winged lion
Will shake free the pieces of me
You pocketed as trinkets - - jagged bits
That even the beach-comber throws back.
I am not ready. I am not ready.
You will find me one day - -
A dull myriad of colors resting on the sand - -
Sage sufferers peaced by the sea.

— Catherine A. Sponagle

